OBSESSION

WRITEN BY
CURRY BARKER

9465 Wilshire Blvd 6th floor, Beverly Hills, CA
Aaron Folbe (248)259-9699

INT. BEAR’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A small, old house with faded yellow walls, a tapestry behind the couch serves as a "poor man's wallpaper." BEAR, 25, slouches on the couch, a depressed existence. He's decent-looking but lacks self-confidence.

He fixates on a pivotal scene from a classic romance film on a small TV, it echoes adding an eerie ambiance to the room.

MAN ON TV (O.S)
I’ve often wondered what it means to truly love someone. And then, I realized it’s what I feel for you. It’s a love that defies the limitations of the world, that remains steadfast even in the face of chaos. Even if the world lost its color, if hope faded into the night, my love for you wouldn’t falter. It’s unwavering and enduring, and it fills every fiber of my being.

Bear’s eyes tell the story of a man who yearns for love but enjoys wallowing in his disappointments. He looks down at the ground in front of him and sighs.

In the center of the room, a DEAD CAT lies where the coffee table should be. Its body is stiff, and the grease from its hair has begun to seep into the carpet, causing it to smell. Bear takes a deep breath and finally stands up.

INT. BEAR’S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Countertops cluttered with junk. On the tile floor: a straw basket, pills, and candle wax from a shattered candle. Bear scoops the pills back into their bottle, reluctantly.

INT. BEAR’S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bear opens the mirror/medicine cabinet and places a pill bottle inside. He shuts the cabinet and looks at himself in the mirror. He tests out a smile; eerie.

INT. BEAR’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The coffee table is shoved aside. Bear, wearing rubber gloves and a dust mask, opens a trash bag over the cat's corpse.

Bear drops the now HEAVY trash bag into a trash can.

On his hands and knees, he scrubs grease and wax from the carpet. *His phone rings in another room.*

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bear walks over to the nightstand, snatching his phone off the charger. A voicemail from NICKY. Bear's face lights up.

NICKY (V.O.)
Hey! You are *so* lucky you weren't scheduled today. We literally *just* got out. Carter was in his mood all day. We had to kick people out... But Ian thinks it's gonna be even worse tomorrow because "*all the high school students* that had orientation today will be showing up." So you'll see what I mean. Oh *fuck! fuck!*
(some movement)
God damn it.

Bear's eyes widen. He calls Nicky back *immediately.*

NICKY (V.O.)
Hey Bear, what's up?

BEAR
Hey, are you good?

NICKY (V.O.)
(Pain)
Yeah... I'm fine.
(laughter)
I bet that was a funny voicemail - I dropped my crystal necklace down a drain while I was talking.

BEAR
Jeez.

NICKY (V.O.)
Yeah, so annoying-

BEAR
Did you get it back?

NICKY (V.O.)
No! Like, it's gone! I dropped it down a fucking drain!
(to herself)
Of all days-

BEAR
Damn.

NICKY (V.O.)
Yeah, today's been awful... What time are you showing up tonight? I wanna secure the "bass clef booth." So I'm gonna get there early. I'll see you at eight?

BEAR
I can meet you early if you want. You don't have to be alone just to secure the spot.

NICKY (V.O.)
Actually, Ian's meeting me early, so I won't be alone.

Bear's head tilts up in frustration at the mention of *Ian*.

BEAR
(hiding his feelings)
Ok, cool. I'll probably show up at eight then. Working on some stuff.

NICKY (V.O.)
Ok! I'll see-

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bear, center-screen, illuminated only by a warm lamp behind him, sits on the edge of his bed, crying. Probably about the cat, or Nicky, or his life. Maybe all of the above.

INT. CRYSTAL SHOP - NIGHT

Crystals, witchcraft books, and incense. A thrifty "mom and pop" shop. Bear aimlessly shops, wearing an Oxford button-up and khakis. He cleans up nice.

VIOLA (O.S.)
If you need help with anything, let me know.

BEAR
Actually, do you have crystal necklaces?

Bear continues to peruse.

VIOLA (O.S.)
Yes, let me show you.

The hipster clerk walks over, VIOLA, 29, right out of Woodstock.

VIOLA (CONT'D)
This is all we have. Each of these stones kinda holds their own unique energies and stuff. Like, this amethyst is for calmness and clarity, and the rose quartz attracts love and shit.

BEAR
Wow, thanks. What's one that's like, good energy or good vibes?

Bear tries to match the clerk's energy.

VIOLA
That would probably be the citrine. It's like sunshine in a rock.

BEAR
Okay, cool... cool. Thanks.

The hipster walks off.

VIOLA (O.S.)
Let me know if there's anything else.

Bear scans the crystals, grabbing a few.

His eyes shift to a lonely shelf just over to the right. Its aged and out-of-place appearance stands out.

The sign reads: "Grab your One Wish Willow!" Only a few scattered boxes remain. They're the size of a toothpaste box, featuring a design reminiscent of a classic 1950s toy package.

Bear grabs one. "*THE ONE WISH WILLOW. SPARK THE MIDDLE AND BREAK IT IN HALF!*" He flips it over. "*You only get one wish, so make it count!*" Bear smiles; *Nicky's gonna love this.*

INT. CRYSTAL SHOP - CHECK OUT - MOMENTS LATER

Bear approaches Viola.

VIOLA
No crystal?

BEAR
I like this.

VIOLA
Yeah, those have been popular since we brought ‘em out. *Everybody wants a wish*.

Bear waits for a laugh. Nothing.

BEAR
(uncomfortable laugh)
Well, it’s not for me.

VIOLA
Don’t come back here complaining.

An awkward beat.

BEAR
Yeah, I wouldn’t— what do you mean? People complain about these?

VIOLA
Well, they’re kind of a collectible. Some people don’t open them. The people who open them complain.

Nothing more.

BEAR
Because it’s a scam and-

VIOLA
Hey man, we’re not a scam!

BEAR
(confused)
No, I mean, why’re they mad? Because it doesn’t work, and they’re like... angry at you?

VIOLA
Or whatever.

A long beat. Bear doesn’t get the joke.

BEAR
(teasing)
Or it works, and they ruin their lives?

VIOLA
(deadpan)
Or they die, or they wish they were dead.

Bear laughs.

BEAR
(nervous)
Wow, you're good.

The clerk laughs for the first time while she rings him up.

VIOLA
That's ten seventy-six.

BEAR
And I'm guessing these "*just* came in this morning? Mysteriously?"

VIOLA
No, we've had them.

BEAR
(egging on)
They've "been here forever? No idea who supplied them?"

Bear's having fun jabbing. The hipster is not having it.

VIOLA
They were recalled in the 80's. We've held on to them.

BEAR
(smug)
Perfect.

VIOLA
Do you want to buy two? There aren't many left.

Bear picks up his bag, walking off.

BEAR
(teasing)
And there's the up-sale! No, I'm good.

VIOLA
As you wish.

BEAR
She’s on fire! Let me guess, “Be careful what you wish”-

VIOLA
(playful)
That’s no fun.

Bear turns around to look at the clerk. She smiles very still; Eerie.

BEAR.
(nervous laughter)
Alrighty. You need a raise.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Bear drives to trivia alone in his early 2000s model. His car still has crank-down windows. He appears to be talking to himself.

BEAR
So, I’ve felt... for a very long time, I’ve tried to find the best way to tell you that... You’re the only person I’ve ever met with the same sense of humor as me. We have the same taste in music, we both love-

IAN (V.O.)
(on speaker phone)
We have the *same taste in music*?

Bear eyes the phone with disapproval.

BEAR
(defensive)
What?

IAN (V.O.)
Okay, right off the bat, way too strong.

BEAR
Well, my feelings are strong.

IAN (V.O.)
Doesn’t matter. That would freak anyone- That freaks ME out. Nicky would vomit on your broken heart.

BEAR
(passionate)
Nicky, for six years-

IAN (V.O.)
Nope.

BEAR
Back in marching-

IAN (V.O.)
Drop the timeline stuff.

BEAR
Nicky, I got you something-

IAN (V.O.)
No, dude! What did you- I don't even wanna know.

BEAR
(pleading)
Then what do I say, Ian? What do I do?

IAN (V.O.)
Dude, you got to be less sappy with Nicky. She doesn't like that shit.

BEAR
I know, so what do I say then?

IAN (V.O.)
Well, honestly, I wish you wouldn't say anything because it's gonna ruin our-

BEAR
I have to, I can't do this anymore-

IAN (V.O.)
I know I'm not gonna stop you. Just- If you're going to say anything, I would say... Nicky, I think we should grab a drink sometime.

BEAR
We have "grabbed drinks sometime." Multiple times. *You knew* I was trying to do this tonight! I ask you guys *one time* not to come to trivia. And you're meeting her early?!

IAN (V.O.)
Dude, I *love* trivia night. It's all I have! I wake up every Wednesday rock-hard thinking about trivia night.

BEAR
You get hard to trivia?

IAN (V.O.)
This wasn't a date, Bear.

BEAR
I know, but-

IAN (V.O.)
This was never gonna be a date! You can't turn our weekly gathering of camaraderie and skill into your 7-year late prom-posal. You gotta take her somewhere else. You have to be clear about your intentions. Do you even try to flirt with her?

BEAR
I don't know how to start-

IAN (V.O.)
Tease her. Girls like when you're jokingly mean to them.

BEAR
Be mean to her?

IAN (V.O.)
Yeah, just be jokingly mean. Bring up, Freaky Nicky!

BEAR
Why would I? Dude, she's sensitive about that shit.

IAN (V.O.)
It's been years. It'll ease the tension that you can laugh about it now. She'll be like
(impersonating Nicky)
"Oh my gawd stop, that was so long ago."

BEAR
Call her Freaky Nicky?

IAN (V.O.)
Yeah, or say remember when you were bullied and everyone called you Freaky Nicky? That was hilarious.

BEAR
(skeptical)
And that will, like... take her breath away?

IAN (V.O.)
Dude, I'm not a dating expert, but I'll tell you this - If you confess your feelings to her like you just did to me, you won't have a relationship with her in *any capacity* after that.

Bear takes this in, more confused than before.

BEAR
Well, maybe that's for the best. I can't just be her *friend* anymore.

Ian sighs through the phone.

IAN (V.O.)
(under his breath)
We all did fine for a while.

BEAR
Painfully.

IAN (V.O.)
Look... there's a better way to do this that increases your chances with her. You know what I mean? If she means this much to you, and I know she does, do it right. You know? Because you're gonna ruin my trivia night if you fuck this up.

INT. TRIVIA BAR - NIGHT

An upbeat retro bar, buzzing with trivia nerds. Bear sits with his best friends — Nicky, Ian, and Sarah. The focus stays tightly on Bear, not yet revealing his friends.

NICKY (O.S.)
And this woman was asking me why the mallets were thirty dollars over and over again!

IAN (O.S.)
It was insane.

NICKY (O.S.)
“Well, ma’am, they’re made with wool and birch wood.” “Okay well, why are they thirty dollars?”

SARAH (O.S.)
Are you serious?

IAN (O.S.)
(to Sarah)
You didn’t see this?

NICKY (O.S.)
“Ma’am, these are very high quality.” Then she said, “You’re not answering my question. What makes these thirty dollars?”

Bear forces a smile, listening to the gang. His gaze keeps returning to Nicky, despite attempts to look away.

SARAH (O.S.)
Jesus Christ.

NICKY (O.S.)
Finally, I was just like, “Why don’t you ask the company who made the fucking mallets?”

SARAH (O.S.)
Who *are* you?!

IAN (O.S.)
You definitely didn’t say fuck.

NICKY (O.S.)
No. I didn’t.

Laughter. We cut from Bear to Ian's hand gently resting on Nicky's shoulder in comfort. Bear, disturbed, forces a laugh and joins in.

BEAR
What did she say to that?

NICKY (O.S.)
She stopped.

SARAH (O.S.)
Really?

NICKY (O.S.)
Yeah, maybe she realized I didn't fucking make the mallets.

BEAR
What did she say tho-

They laugh over Bear's words.

NICKY (O.S.)
(aggravated)
Maybe she realized I wasn't in the back carving birch wood and weaving wool.

A long silence.

IAN (O.S.)
Yeah...

SARAH (O.S.)
(teasing)
And Bear, what did you do all day?

Ian laughs.

BEAR
Well actually-

IAN (O.S.)
(to Nicky)
Next time, you should get the gun in Carter's safe.

SARAH (O.S.)
Jesus, Ian-

NICKY (O.S.)
There's a gun?

SARAH (O.S.)
Ian, how do you know about the gun?

IAN (O.S.)
The other day it was just me and Carter closing, and I had to open the safe. There's a tiny silver revolver in there.

SARAH (O.S.)
Yeah, and if my dad knew you touched his gun, he would kill you with it.

NICKY (O.S.)
Sarah, why does your dad have a gun in the store?

SARAH (O.S.)
Maybe to protect your happy ass.

NICKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I don't like that.

SARAH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Here we go.

NICKY (O.S.)
You know you're thirty percent more likely to die from a gun accident by owning one.

SARAH (O.S.)
And you're one hundred percent more likely to die in a gunfight without a gun.

NICKY (O.S.)
(aggravated)
And how many gunfights have you been in Sarah? I need to pee.

As Nicky exits, we shift to SARAH, 25, cute, effortlessly cool, with a large bass clef tattoo on her left arm and a heart tattoo above her left breast. She's unknowingly sporting a beer mustache.

SARAH
Okay, Karen.
(to Ian)
You had to tell her about the gun? I know she's gonna make a whole ass deal about it with my Dad.

IAN (O.S.)
No, she's not. Stop being an ass.

BEAR
Why is Nicky acting weird?

IAN (O.S.)
She had a rough day today, bro. Saw her crying in the break room.

BEAR
Did you ask her what's wrong?

SARAH
(sarcastic)
Maybe she realized nobody wants to read her dumb novel.

IAN (O.S)
Shut up, Sarah. You're getting declined by tattoo schools.

SARAH
It's art school. And I've applied to several. That's the difference.

BEAR
(to Ian about Nicky)
So I probably shouldn't...

Bear makes a face like "you know."

SARAH
Shouldn't what?

IAN (O.S)
(to Sarah)
Nothing.
(to Bear)
No, you should tell her.

SARAH
Tell her what?

Sarah looks confused.

NICKY (O.S.)
Tell me what?

We hear Ian jump! Bear laughs.

SARAH
JESUS!

IAN (O.S)
Approach a motherfucker, Nicky, damn.

Nicky sits back down.

SARAH
Not everything is about you, Nicky.

NICKY
Well, I knew it wasn't about you, Beer Stache.

Sarah shoots a look of embarrassment at Bear as she wipes the beer from her mouth. Ian and Nicky laugh.

NICKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
So, how was your day, Bear?

BEAR
I had a shitty day.

NICKY (O.S.)
Wait, didn't you say you have a crazy story?

BEAR
Oh yeah. I don't know about crazy, just kinda sad.

NICKY (O.S.)
What happened though?

The TRIVIA GUY, 40s, starts announcing as Bear is about to speak.

TRIVIA GUY (O.S.)
Hey, hey, hey! Thanks for coming out tonight! Drinks are thirty percent off for the next twenty-three minutes so get your beer on!

Bear tries to talk over the man.

BEAR
(yelling)
My cat died!

TRIVIA GUY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And as always, if you're new here the winner of tonight's trivia will win a one hundred-dollar visa!

The crowd cheers!

NICKY (O.S.)
What?

BEAR
(still yelling)
My cat died!

NICKY (O.S.)
Oh no!

IAN (O.S.)
How'd that happen?

BEAR
Got into some pills!

TRIVIA GUY (O.S.)
And tonight's theme is going to be early film trivia!

The crowd cheers. NICKY, 24, steps into frame, a mix of intelligence, beauty, and effortless charm. She has the cool, girl-next-door appeal.

NICKY
Oh Bear, that's horrible.

Nicky crawls into the booth, hugging Bear in a way that lingers beyond friendly. She kisses his cheek, enough to confuse any man.

IAN (O.S.)
Jeez dude, Sandy? That fucking sucks!

TRIVIA GUY (O.S.)
Ok, this first one is a two-parter, You have to answer both. Here we go. This animated film stars a blue genie that could grant three wishes. What is the name of this movie and what year did it come out?

As the crowd quiets, writing down answers, Bear clings tightly to Nicky. He lives for moments like this.

TRIVIA GUY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What classic movie features a famous landmark in New York City that's often associated with making wishes by throwing coins into its fountain?

CUT TO:

EXT. TRIVIA BAR - PARKING LOT - LATER

The Gang walks out into the parking lot. IAN, 25, leads the group. He's taller than Bear and better-looking in the classic sense. He seems like a nice guy, but he likes to be in charge.

IAN
Come on! We're going to Greedo's.

NICKY
No, please! I want to go home.

IAN
You're saying no to Karaoke?

NICKY
I'm saying no to being around bad, drunk singers when I just want to go home and sleep.

IAN
Who's gonna sing Salt-N-Pepa with me!?

NICKY
Sarah knows the part.

SARAH
(rapping)
Bright as the sun, I wanna have some fun. Come and give me some of that-

Nicky joins in, smiling for the first time. Bear thinks this is SO CUTE.

SARAH/NICKY
(rapping)
Yum-yum chocolate chip honey dip, can I get a scoop? Baby take a ride in my coupe, you make me wanna-
(singing)
Shoop, shoop ba-doop. Shoop ba-doop, shoop ba-doop ba-doop ba-doop.

IAN
(playful)
See, Sarah sucks!

SARAH
(taken aback)
Wow.

Nicky and Bear start laughing hard.

IAN
It's true.

The moment slows down.

NICKY
Ian, I want to go home... I had a long day.

IAN
My car is headed to Greedo's, Nicky.

NICKY
Please drop me off first.

Bear leaps at the opportunity, unable to hide his eagerness.

BEAR
I can drive you home.

Sarah's eyes dart to Bear, filled with disappointment.

NICKY
Thank you.

IAN
(knowing look at Bear)
There-

SARAH
(begging)
No. Bear, you have to come.

Sarah playfully grabs Bear’s arm.

BEAR
Fuck that! I’m too tired.

SARAH
(kind of kidding)
Ugh! Fuck you!

Bear laughs.

NICKY
Alright Bear, let’s go.

Ian hugs Nicky, and Sarah hugs Bear, giving him a flirty squeeze after the embrace.

BEAR
Bye, guys. See you tomorrow morning. Ian.

Bear and Ian exchange a dap. Ian points at Bear as they part ways.

IAN
(to Bear)
Get your girl home safely.

NICKY
Ew, don’t say it like *that.*

Ian shoots Bear a look of defeat. Bear hides his disappointment.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

In the smallness of the car, Nicky's intoxication becomes more obvious. She slurs her words, stares off, and her movements are abrupt.

NICKY
I'm sorry about your cat, Baron.

BEAR
It's okay. I mean, it's not, but I don't think it's hit me yet.

NICKY
Well, you know you can call me when it does.

BEAR
Yeah, I know.

NICKY
Why does Ian force everyone to drink so much?

A beat. Bear thinks about it.

BEAR
Maybe... maybe he thinks if he can force people to do things, they'll discover it's what they've always wanted.

NICKY
(blunt)
Profound.

BEAR
Don't let me forget, I got you something.

Nicky's mood shifts. She's apprehensive.

NICKY
Why am I nervous?

BEAR
(disappointed)
I don't know. That's an odd reaction.

NICKY
(a quick redirect)
Better get ready for tomorrow.

BEAR
Was it really that bad?

NICKY
Everyone was so needy. “Excuse me, there’s a line.” “We actually *just* have a question. We’re looking for the woodwind mouthpieces.” “Of course. If you just turn the fuck around, they’re right behind you. Where it says woodwind.”

They laugh together, Bear charmed by her humor. The conversation feels flirty.

BEAR
(awkward)
“Excuse me, sir, is there a code to the bathroom?” “No sir, just walk right the fuck in!”

Nicky grabs Bear’s knee.

NICKY
God, were we that annoying?

BEAR
No.
(Nicky laughs)
I refuse to believe we were that annoying.

The car pulls into her driveway. A long, uncomfortable beat.

NICKY
I might quit.

BEAR
(realizing)
Oh... Why?

NICKY
I’m just not happy there.

BEAR
(he gets it)
Yeah...

NICKY
I don’t feel like I’m getting anywhere. I’m stuck.

BEAR
It’s just a job, Nicky.

NICKY
I know, but I want to write.

BEAR
I mean... you are?

NICKY
I feel like I need to make a big change. I'm not feeling...*love*. I need my head in the right place to bring this to life.

BEAR
Love...? It's a romance?

NICKY
No, it's not a romance. It's a love story.

BEAR
(teasing)
Isn't that a romance?

NICKY
I don't think romance is real. I think love is real, but not romance. Romance makes life feel magical, like in movies. Then, your parents split, or they're so miserable you wish they would. People start telling you love fades, it's mirage. They're wrong. *romance* fades. Love is a different thing, and that's what I wanna write. The good, the bad, the ugly. Real shit.

Bear can't keep his eyes off of her. Her EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE is so attractive to him.

NICKY (CONT'D)
I don't want to promise anyone anything, I just want to show them what it could be.

A long beat. Bear keeps going back to her lips. He aches to kiss her.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Is that stupid?

BEAR
(startled back to the moment)
No, no, no! That's incredible.

Nicky is embarrassed.

BEAR (CONT'D)
You would definitely bring a unique voice to the genre.

Nicky giggles.

BEAR (CONT'D)
I'm serious. I agree, love has been so... overpromised.

NICKY
Yeah.

She seems impressed by his compassion and somewhat insulted by his "expertise."

BEAR
Is that all that's been bothering you?

Nicky gives Bear a look as if she wants to say more.

NICKY
You know you're the only person I can talk to about this stuff.

BEAR
You are, too.

NICKY
Even when things get crazy at work, you're a good listener. I don't feel like I'm talking to a brick wall.

BEAR
Yeah?

Bear's in his head, trying to figure out what to say to keep his good fortune going.

NICKY
You know, Sarah was asking about you all day today.

Bear doesn't like this subject change.

NICKY (CONT'D)
How do you feel about that?

BEAR
(disappointed, polite)
You want to know if I like Sarah?

NICKY
I'm asking you how you *feel* about Sarah. And if you *were* to have a crush on her... then that would be how you feel about her.

Bear doesn't respond.

BEAR
I like her as a friend.

NICKY
I figured, god she's so obvious.

BEAR
Yeah, she is.

NICKY
When I have a crush on a guy, no one knows.

Nicky and Bear lock eyes. Is she *insinuating something*?

BEAR
What do you mean?

NICKY
I'm *really* good at hiding my feelings for someone.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Okay. Bye, Bear. Thanks.

Nicky gets out of the car.

INT/EXT. PARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

Before she shuts the door:

BEAR
(desperate)
Nicky wait.

She bends down, peering through the car door opening. Almost bothered.

BEAR (CONT'D)
I wanted to tell you, uhm...

Nicky waits. Bear loses his courage.

BEAR (CONT'D)
I lost my train of thought.

NICKY
Silly Bear.

Nicky begins to shut the door.

BEAR
(talking fast)
Remember in Mr. Deedo's class when I forgot my mouthpiece? And he was in a pissy mood that day, but during scales, you told me you had an extra, so you gave me yours. But that was a lie. You only had one. So... instead, you just got in huge trouble-

NICKY
Yeah, I remember.

Bear senses Nicky's not as sappy about this memory as he is.

BEAR
You always go out of your way for me, and not just me, for everyone-

NICKY
Bear, Deedo liked me, you were on thin ice.

Bear's speech is interrupted. He sits back in his disappointment.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Goodnight.

Ian was right about the sappy stuff; one final attempt.

BEAR
Alright, goodnight... *Freaky Nicky*.

Nicky gives Bear a disgusted look.

NICKY
Ew! Don't call me that.

BEAR
(chuckles nervously)
I'm just kidding.

Bear maintains a smile.

NICKY
Not even as a joke. Ever.

BEAR
Sorry!

NICKY
Bear, you know I don't like that.

BEAR
I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

NICKY
(stern)
Goodnight.

The car door shuts, and Bear's expression falls, shoulders slumping. He watches Nicky enter her house and close the door behind her, pain washing over him.

BEAR
Fuck. Fuck.

A long beat. Bear reaches into his backpack in the back seat and pulls out the ONE WISH WILLOW. Seeing it, he laughs, then glances at Nicky's empty porch and opens the box — Pop! A spark lights the stick. The box drops into his backpack, prompting another laugh.

BEAR (CONT'D)
(half serious)
I wish Nicky Freeman loved me more
than anyone in the fucking world.

He BREAKS THE BRANCH IN HALF, resting his head on the steering wheel.

Starting the car, Bear startled by NICKY on the porch, looking at him, lost. She looks back at her house, confused, as if not recognizing it, then turns to Bear, points at herself questioningly, and walks to the car with a wide, eerie smile.

BEAR (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
What the fuck?

Bear glances at his broken stick, shoves it into his backpack, and hurriedly throws it to the back seat. He rolls down the window as Nicky approaches.

BEAR (CONT'D)
(confused)
Hey, just had to pull up directions.

NICKY
You said you had something for me?

A beat. Bear nods, a mix of realization and relief crossing his face. He gets it now.

BEAR
Oh... yeah I- well- I- It's at my house.

NICKY
Oh, okay.

Silence stretches. Nicky's gaze on Bear is expectant, tapping her fingers on the window frame.

BEAR
I can bring it to work tomorrow.

NICKY
Um ok...

BEAR
Okay, goodnight.

NICKY
Actually, you could use some company tonight. I mean, I did just lose my cat, Bear-

BEAR
You lost *your* cat?

NICKY
Oh wait, I mean, you lost *your* cat. I'm sorry. I am so sorry for your loss. What should we- are you-
(shakes her head)
Are you gonna come inside or?

A beat. Bear looks over to the One Wish Willow in the back.

BEAR
Nicky, are you okay...?

NICKY
Are you okay?

Silence.

BEAR
What- like, because of the cat?

NICKY
Yeah.

BEAR
Yeah, I’m ok.

NICKY
(genuine and slow)
Why don’t you come inside, and we can have a few drinks? Talk about-

BEAR
The cat?

NICKY
The cat, yeah... I'm so sorry... yeah.

The repeated “yeah” in the same tone is eerie and makes Bear a bit wary.

BEAR
Nicky, I'm a little confused. I think you’re drunk.

NICKY
No, I’m not, actually.

BEAR
Maybe you should get some sleep.

Nicky crosses her arms like a child who didn’t get her way. It's strange seeing her this way; her body language contradicts her personality.

NICKY
(like a child)
Actually, no, no, no.

BEAR
What?

Bear is thrown off.

NICKY
(still childlike)
I know what you're trying to do.

BEAR
I uhh-

NICKY
Fine, let's go to *your* place.

Nicky opens the passenger door, sliding into the vehicle.

BEAR
Nicky, you're kinda freaking me out.

Nicky's body language returns to normal.

NICKY
(disappointed)
Really?

BEAR
I mean, I have never seen you act this way.

NICKY
Oh, Jesus. Gross. I don't know what's...
(trails off)

Bear is relieved, but confused.

NICKY (CONT'D)
I must be pretty fucked up.

BEAR
Yeah... I know. That's why I think you need water and sleep. You know?

Nicky rests her head on the dash and closes her eyes, arms dangling by her side. Her posture and silence are strange, unpredictable. Nicky takes a deep breath, unsure what to do next.

NICKY
Actually.

BEAR
What?

A beat.

NICKY
My dad’s dying.

BEAR
Nicky, no-

NICKY
Leukemia. I don’t know that much. Apparently, he hasn’t been to work in weeks. My mom called *asking me to go see him*, so I know it’s serious.

BEAR
I’m so sorry.

NICKY
It’s okay. Honesty It’s okay, I just... I’m actually fine with it. I just needed to...

Nicky starts to BAWL. It all makes sense now.

NICKY (CONT’D)
I took one step into my house and I couldn’t...

BEAR
No... god, I’m so, so sorry...

Bear doesn't know what to say.

BEAR (CONT’D)
Nicky...

Nicky falls into Bear’s arms weeping!

NICKY
(through the tears)
It still hurts, you know?

BEAR
No, I know. I’m sure it still hurts.

NICKY
And I can’t really afford a plane ticket over there right now.

BEAR
I can pay for that, Nicky.

NICKY
No, it’s like, I don’t even want to see him, you know?

Bear holds Nicky.

BEAR
And that’s okay, Nicky.

NICKY
And I feel bad!

BEAR
It’s not your fault.

NICKY
No, I feel bad but... I never saw him before, so why should I see him now? You know?

BEAR
No, that’s okay!

She calms down a little. A long beat.

NICKY
Can we go, please?

BEAR
Where do you want to go?

NICKY
I just can’t sleep in my bed. I don’t want to be alone.

BEAR
Uhm, okay, yeah.

Bear holds her a bit longer.

INT. BEAR’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bear and Nicky walk through the front door. Nicky looking around, wipes a tear, and walks towards the kitchen.

NICKY
(in awe)
Wow.

BEAR
Uh, so yeah. This is it...

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Bear follows.

NICKY
Smaller than your last place- Oh my god.

Nicky stops as she is struck by something...

BEAR
What?

NICKY
(profound)
It smells like you.

BEAR
What do you mean? Does it smell bad?

NICKY
(content)
No. It’s just *you*. It’s nice.

Nicky’s sweetness touches Bear. He walks up to her.

BEAR
Nicky, you need some sleep. Okay?

INT. BEAR’S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nicky sits up in bed, fully clothed under the covers. Bear lingers in the doorway, like a father saying goodnight.

NICKY
I’m sorry I was so weird earlier. I-

BEAR
No need to explain. Take all the space- or I mean, time that you need okay? Goodnight.

Bear turns off the light switch. The atmosphere turns dark and moody as he starts to leave.

NICKY
Wait.

BEAR
Yeah?

NICKY
Will you sleep with me?

Bear is troubled by this request.

BEAR
Uhhh.

NICKY
Please, I get in my head. I'll stare at the ceiling all night if I'm in here by myself.

A beat.

BEAR
Yeah... I can do that.

Bear starts to remove his shoes when Nicky begins undressing. He quickly turns away. She continues to remove her shirt and pants in the b.g.

This is BIZARRE, but he ain't complaining. Slowly turning back, he sees Nicky giving him a sad smile. He approaches her gently and softly touches her arm.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

NICKY
Given the circumstances...

Bear hesitates, then sits beside her on the bed, cautious and uncertain of the limits. He's taken aback when she lays her head on his shoulder.

NICKY (CONT'D)
I needed this.

BEAR
(skeptical)
Really?

NICKY
Yeah.

Bear wants to ask why, but he doesn't.

BEAR
I'm sorry.

Bear builds the courage to put his arm around her.

NICKY
I’m sorry about your cat.

BEAR
(remembering)
Oh my god, are you kidding?

NICKY
It still matters.

A tear rolling down her face, she softly takes Bear's chin and leans in for a kiss.

BEAR
(confused)
Wait.

Bear is uncertain if her feelings stem from grief or desperation. Yet, gazing into her eyes, he realizes his deep longing for this moment. He succumbs to her kisses, each one intensifying their shared passion.

Suddenly, Nicky opens her eyes to find herself kissing Bear. She recoils in shock, pushing him away with TERROR IN HER EYES.

NICKY
AH! BEAR!?

Bear, equally confused, is taken aback.

BEAR
What?! What?! What?!

Nicky very quickly composes herself.

NICKY
(leaning back)
Oh my god, I'm so sorry.

BEAR
You kissed me!

NICKY
I know. I’m so sorry. Can we just sleep?

BEAR
What the *FUCK WAS THAT?*!

NICKY
I don’t know, I’m sorry!

BEAR
No no no, what the fuck was that, Nicky!

NICKY
I thought I saw something. I don't know. I'm sorry!

BEAR
You don't have to be sorry. It just... made me feel like... I was doing something you didn't like.

NICKY
I know, I'm sorry.

NICKY (CONT'D)
I just got spooked. I think it was a panic attack...

BEAR
Scared the shit out of me. What?

NICKY (CONT'D)
A panic attack, yeah.

BEAR
Really?

NICKY
(getting emotional)
Yeah, I'm so... lost...

Bear studies Nicky as she starts to cry again. He's skeptical but extends his arm to comfort her from a distance.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Bear lies on the floor with blankets and a pillow, eyes wide open. He gets up and exits frame.

--BATHROOM He flips on the light and washes his face. Leaving the bathroom-

--BEDROOM He sees NICKY'S DARK SHADOW sitting up in bed *staring at him.*

NICKY
(eerie)
What were you doing?

Scared half to death. A beat.

BEAR
I was just going to the bathroom.

NICKY
Thank God.

A prolonged, eerie silence. They lock eyes. Then, Bear lies back on his pallet as the silent tension mounts.

NICKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Can you lay with me?

Bear is deeply disturbed.

BEAR
I don't know, Nicky.

A long beat.

NICKY
Please.

Bear joins her in bed. She quickly wraps an arm around him. Frozen, Bear is uneasy.

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

The sun filters through the blinds as Bear wakes up to an empty bed, his mind racing. He chuckles at the notion of a wild dream until Nicky's bag by the door catches his eye, prompting him to get up.

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Breakfast is on the table and an odd smell lingers, but the house seems vacant. He walks to the kitchen, finding his cat's corpse on the ground, surrounded by flower petals. Bear approaches,

NICKY (O.S)
I'm sorry. I found the body in the trash. I didn't think that was proper, Bear.

Bear turns to face Nicky.

BEAR
Nicky...?

Nicky approaches Bear dressed in a blue short-sleeved button-up shirt, adorned with a Mandy's Music lanyard, and a name tag that reads "Nicky."

NICKY
Do you want to say a few words and then I can clean this up?

BEAR
(confused)
Uh... He was a good cat.

Nicky laughs.

NICKY
Amen.

BEAR
Nicky, this is weird.

NICKY
(defensive)
Weird?

Nicky adjusts herself as if she is offended by the remark. She picks up the stiff, dead cat with one hand and tosses it in the garbage, a hint of attitude in her action.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(defensive)
You threw him in the trash Bear. It's not cool.

Bear studies her.

EXT. MANDY'S MUSIC - PARKING LOT - DAY

A wide shot shows MANDY'S MUSIC, featuring a large "MARCHING SEASON DISCOUNT MATINÉE" sign. Only a handful of cars are parked out front.

Bear's car pulls up. Both in uniform, Bear and Nicky exit, Bear with a backpack. As they walk, Nicky grabs Bear's hand, but he gently pulls away.

BEAR
(shocked)
Woah... uh let's not do that, just right now.

NICKY
Yeah, gross.

Nicky takes a step away from him.

INT. MANDY’S MUSIC - CONTINUOUS

Saxophones, drum sets, and guitars line the walls. We follow them as CARTER, 52, the overweight boss and Sarah's dad, quickly draws Nicky's attention.

CARTER
Nicky, thank god. Show me that piano outlet that’s not working. It’s about to get crazy and I don’t want a Karen saying no.

We continue to follow behind Bear.

NICKY (O.S)
(to Carter)
Nooo, that’s not-

CARTER (O.S) (CONT’D)
(to Nicky)
You get me?

Nicky’s voice, distant in the b.g.

NICKY (O.S.) (CONT’D)
(to Carter)
No, I’m not really getting you.

We move past the front desk, finding Ian by the computer, smiling broadly.

IAN
(high pitch, under breath)
Broooooooo.

BEAR
(nonchalant)
Break room, break room, break room.

INT. MANDY’S MUSIC - BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A breakfast table, surrounded by a microwave, fridge, and coffee machine. Bear places his backpack on the table and makes a beeline for the coffee.

IAN
Bro, what the FUCK happened last night?

BEAR
You wouldn’t believe what a crazy night I had.

IAN
You fucked Nicky. You dog.

BEAR
No, dude.

IAN
What did you *say* to her?

BEAR
No, I didn't fuck her.

IAN
I *just* saw you come in together.
Did she sleep over?

BEAR
Ian, listen to me.

IAN
(confused)
What?

Then, from across the store through the break room window, Bear sees Nicky watching him, a smile on her face.

IAN (CONT'D)
Did you kiss? What are you scared of?! Sarah's going to hate this.

Bear's focused on Nicky, not listening anymore. Ian turns to see what captured his attention.

IAN (CONT'D)
(off Nicky)
What the fuck...

Bear smiles at Nicky *genuinely* and then turns around to hide his face.

BEAR
(to Ian laughing)
Laugh. Laugh.

Ian laughs.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Nicky's like... going through something.

IAN
What?

BEAR
And she's acting super fucking weird! Like she was...

Bear doesn't even know what he believes.

IAN
(concerned)
Like, what? Is she ok?

BEAR
No.

IAN
Did she tell you what's wrong?

BEAR
Well, yeah kind of, but it seems like more...

IAN
Well, what is it?

BEAR
It's not my place.

IAN
Dude, come on.

BEAR
Her dad has cancer.

This hits Ian ODDLY SPECIFIC.

IAN
Woah, what?

Ian looks shocked, like he knows something.

BEAR
That's what she told me.

IAN
(confused)
Her Dad in Washington that she doesn't care about?

BEAR
It still hurts, Ian.

IAN
(pondering)
Yeah, yeah.

BEAR
But, it was more than that. I think she's having a mental breakdown or something. She would freak out...
(MORE)

BEAR (CONT'D)
and then act all happy... and she was kissing me and then crying. It was... weird.

Ian's face grows suspicious.

IAN
What the fuck? Are you joking?-

BEAR
No!

IAN
Was this after you told her how you felt?

Bear hesitates.

BEAR
I didn't tell her.

A beat.

IAN
What?

BEAR
I didn't tell her.

Ian's confusion grows.

IAN
You... She was kissing you? How exactly?

BEAR
I seriously think she needs help.

IAN
And she was crying?

BEAR
Yes! And then she would just snap back to happy. It was terrifying, psychotic... She wanted me to cuddle and sleep with her.

IAN
Did you?!

BEAR
No, I-

IAN
Because if you did, that's fucked up-

BEAR
No, I wouldn't.

IAN
Dude!

BEAR
I slept on the floor. She was freaking me out.

IAN
Was she on molly again?

BEAR
No... Well, I don't know. I mean...

Bear's head tilts at the idea.

IAN
Yeah dude, sounds like she was on molly.

BEAR
Yeah, maybe.

IAN
I'm going to go talk to her.

BEAR
Just... Is she still staring at me?

Ian darts *his eyes* to check.

IAN
Yes.

BEAR
Just don't be weird.

Ian leaves and Bear pretends to make coffee. Through the window, we see Ian and Nicky talking. Bear turns around, avoiding eye contact.

Quickly, his gaze lands on the unzipped backpack on the table, exposing the ONE WISH WILLOW.

Realization hits Bear as he looks back at Ian and Nicky. Ian talks, Nicky nods, yet her unsettling smile at Bear remains. Bear strides through the break room door.

INT - MANDY'S MUSIC - FRONT DESK AREA - CONTINUOUS

Bear walks straight over to the computer.

NICKY
Hey, Bear.

IAN
(playfully joining)
Hey, Bear.

Ian continues to talk to Nicky in the b.g. as Bear goes to *a search engine.*

He types: One Wish Willow 80s recall.

He skims the results and clicks keywords:

Collectible item, novelty, Mandela effect.

AS HE TYPES, THE CHAOS OF THE STORE INCREASES. HORNS PLAY OUT OF TUNE, STUDENTS CHATTER, AND LAUGHTER GROWING IN VOLUME.

EMPLOYEE (O.S.)
Here we go.

CARTER (O.S.)
Jason, go to guitars. Sarah honey, stock up percussion.

He types: Does a One Wish Willow actually work?

No, a One Wish Willow is just an urban legend.

Yes, a One Wish Willow really does grant you one wish!

One Wish Willows never existed. This is a result of the Mandela effect.

Click.

When a large group of people remember something that never existed this is a phenomenon called the Mandela effect. If you find a One Wish Willow stay away.

Related searches: Big Foot, Skin-walkers, Fruit of the Loom logo.

We stay on Bear, curious.

THE CHAOS OF THE STORE ACTS AS A SOUNDTRACK. HORNS, FEEDBACK, AND CHATTER BUILD THE INTENSITY.

CARTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Baron, I'm gonna need you to play Moon River on the piano for the 14-year-old *shit-brick* in keyboards.

BEAR
Yes, sir.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MANDY'S MUSIC - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The tranquility of the surroundings contrasts with the prior commotion. The gentle chirping of crickets fills the air. Bear exits the store, Nicky trailing closely behind. Sarah and Ian follow.

BEAR
That was insane.

NICKY
Told you.

Nicky begins to open Bear's passenger side door.

BEAR
Hey, actually... I don't know if I can take you home.

NICKY
Why?

BEAR
Well, I needed to run some errands. I'm not going straight home.

NICKY
(annoyed and hurt)
Okay... How am I supposed to get home then?

Ian approaches.

IAN
I can take you.

BEAR
Perfect!

Nicky lingers on Bear's face and walks away.

NICKY
Alright.

IAN
(mouthing to Bear)
What the fuck.

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bear folds laundry in the living room, distracted. The ONE WISH WILLOW sits on the coffee table, beside his open laptop with a "MOLLY SIDE EFFECTS" article tab visible.

Bear pulls up his phone to call Nicky. A knock at the door. Bear jerks his head.

INT/EXT. BEAR'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Nicky stands at the door, wearing a lovely dress and full makeup. She is stunning.

NICKY
Hey, Bear.

BEAR
Nicky? What's up?

NICKY
I had to shower and I didn't know what to wear.

BEAR
What do you mean?

NICKY
Listen, I'm really sorry about last night. Ian told me you were freaked out-

BEAR
Oh, no Nicky, it's fine!

NICKY
I probably shouldn't have taken anything.

A beat.

BEAR
Oh?

NICKY
Yeah... So I was on MDMA.

Bear leans into the door frame. He’s relieved to know the truth, though it does sting.

BEAR
Right.

NICKY
And wasted.

BEAR
Right... So, do you remember?

Nicky waits.

BEAR (CONT’D)
Stuff.

NICKY
I mean some of it. If I was weird, that’s why. And I probably made choices I wouldn’t have made otherwise.

Bear’s eyes narrow with disappointment. Nicky's gaze shifts, a growing concern in her eyes.

BEAR
And what about this morning?-

NICKY
(stern)
I just... I want to be transparent with you about some things.

BEAR
You don’t have to explain.

NICKY
Actually, I feel like...

Nicky abruptly turns, now facing away. We see the back of her head, her shoulders shaking as she bursts into laughter — an extremely BIZARRE moment.

BEAR
Nicky, what the fuck?

Nicky turns back around to face Bear. Her face is flat. Serious. A long beat.

NICKY
(taunting)
I know you like me, Bear.

Bear is thrown off.

BEAR
Well...no, I...why?

Nicky's face shifts slowly into a big smile.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Do you like me?

NICKY
Would it freak you out if I said yes?

A long beat. It's an oddly romantic moment. Bear stares at her. His smile becomes a laugh, somewhat shy and defensive.

BEAR
How long would you say you've felt this way?

NICKY
I mean, it just sort of... happened over time. Last Christmas it started, I don't know.

Bear is in shock, suddenly hyperaware of his face, posture, and clothing. He even concentrates to breathe. This is real.

NICKY (CONT'D)
The more we've hung out... I just...I- Don't you have feelings for me?

Bear glances at the ground, then back up at her. He's dreamed of this moment his entire adult life.

BEAR
Yeah, I do.

Nicky walks over, gently tugs his shirt, and wraps her arms tightly around him in a silent embrace, leaning her forehead into his shoulder. Bear's gaze stays up, lost in deep thought.

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

THE MUSIC CONTINUES WITHIN THE FOLLOWING *MONTAGE-ESC* SCENES.

Nicky and Bear are together on the bed, the room bathed in warm colors and shadows. Nicky crawls above Bear, and they begin to kiss slowly, with intensity.

Suddenly, a stark realization FLICKERS IN NICKY'S EYES, a silent scream of awareness. She snaps upright, as if jolted by an unseen force.

NICKY
Bear?! What's going on?!

Bear scrambles to his elbows pulling away.

BEAR
What?!

Nicky snaps back, her fear morphs into a smile.

NICKY
Nothing.

Bear leans back, alarmed and bewildered, unwilling to go through this again.

Nicky tenderly draws him back, guiding his hand to caress her face, then down her chest to between her legs. She moans, and they kiss, reigniting their passion as they hurriedly shed their clothes.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

- Nicky and Bear make breakfast together.

- Nicky and Bear eat at the table. Laughing, having a good time.

INT. MANDY'S MUSIC (BREAK ROOM) - DAY

- Nicky and Bear in the break room making out.

- Ian sees this and think it's SO strange.

- Sarah is deeply hurt by this.

- Nicky and Bear play the piano together at work.

- Carter has an uncomfortable look on his face.

INT. NICKY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Nicky's bedroom is pink with flower decals, marching band stickers, and bookshelves full of books.

- Nicky and Bear look at yearbook photos together on Nicky's Bed.

- Nicky and Bear Reminisce about when they met.

INT. SMALL TOWN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A cozy, somewhat upscale spot with checkered tablecloths and candles, it's the town's go-to for "fancy." Bear and Nicky share a bread and butter platter.

BEAR
No it was homeroom.

NICKY
Are you sure?

BEAR
No, I specifically remember we were doing busy work for Ms. Crawford. She wanted us to write down what career we wanted after school, and you said “writer,” and I said “In a Band,” and the teacher made me change it. You leaned over to me and you said-

BEAR (CONT’D)
I’ll be in your band.

NICKY
I’ll be in your band.

They laugh.

BEAR (CONT’D)
Those were the first words you ever said to me.

NICKY
We never did start that band.

BEAR
Thank God.

Nicky folds over, laughing.

NICKY
(teasing)
You don’t want to start one now?

BEAR
No thanks.

NICKY
(teasing)
Are you sure? I could call Ian. I know a drummer, too.

Bear *gets a call from Ian* and ignores it.

NICKY (CONT'D)
What do you really want to do? I've never asked.

BEAR
No, you haven't.

NICKY
I've known you for so long, and I'm just now realizing I don't even know that much about you.

BEAR
That's not all your fault. I'm kind of private, I guess.

NICKY
You guess?

BEAR
I've been told.

NICKY
By who?

BEAR
Ian... You actually... You told me that once.

NICKY
I did?

BEAR
You said I was a "closed book."

NICKY
I did.
(squinting in thought)
Well, the best part about a closed book, is now I get to read it from the start. A book not many people have read, since it's private.

A long, intimate beat.

BEAR
What do you want to know?

NICKY
(a smirk)
What do you want to be when you grow up?

Bear looks at Nicky, love in his eyes.

BEAR
Well, my dad works at the Toyota in Mobile, so once I-

NICKY
(playful)
I didn't ask what you'll *most likely* end up doing.

Bear laughs.

NICKY (CONT'D)
I want to know what Baron Bailey would be the happiest doing for the rest of his life.

BEAR
I really don't want or need much. I think I want a house... maybe in Fairhope? A few kids...

NICKY
How many?

Nicky smiles. She's a good listener.

BEAR
Not too many. Three. So they grow up together. I'd be a food critic or something.

NICKY
(laughing)
A food critic? You put ketchup on your steak!

BEAR
I'd go in and they're like "Hey! you're that food guy! And I'm like "Please call me *Three Bite Bailey*." They bring me a four-course meal. I pull out my wallet and they say, "Oh no, tonight is on the house." And then get paid.

NICKY
(teasing)
Is that how that works?

BEAR
I don't actually know.

NICKY
Who pays the foodies?

BEAR
I'm not actually sure.

They laugh. The romance is palpable.

NICKY
Okay, Mister Food Critic. What's the verdict of this bread?

Bear picks up a piece of bread, smells it, licks it, and holds it to his eye for inspection.

BEAR
It's slightly stale, but the butter makes up for that shit.

NICKY
Profound.

BEAR
That'll be a hundred dollars.

Nicky laughs.

NICKY
(flirty)
Oh no, I don't have that much. Is there something we can work out?

Nicky flips her hair.

BEAR
Well, I don't know, Ma'am. I'm very serious about my collections.

Bear gets another incoming call from Ian.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Hold on. It's the second time he's called.

Bear walks away from the table.

BEAR (CONT'D)
What dude, I'm busy.

IAN (V.O.)
Busy doing Nicky?

BEAR
What do you want?

IAN (V.O.)
Ok, so...

A beat.

BEAR
What is it?

IAN (V.O.)
I'm not gonna tell Sarah about this because I don't wanna spread drama, but I looked into Nicky's Dad having cancer, and he's healthy as a baby. He's been at work every day.

BEAR
How do you know?

IAN (V.O.)
I called the hospital Nicky told me about and they didn't even know who I was talking about. Something's going on, dude.

Bear looks back at Nicky in the distance and waves, then turns in the other direction.

IAN (V.O.)
Plus, Sarah told me today that Nicky always said you were like a brother, and the thought of being with you grosses her out. And hey man, take it with a grain of salt. People can change. But you should know, because this is all weird.

BEAR
What are you saying?

IAN (V.O)
You have to admit, this is strange.

BEAR
(defeated)
I'm not, *not* saying that.

IAN (V.O.)
Maybe Sarah is jealous and made that up, but even if you take that out of the equation...

Ian's voice fades away as Bear drops into a state of darkness. He slowly turns his head to Nicky as Ian talks.

IAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This is strange dude. It's like Nicky snapped into a different person.

Nicky is staring at Bear, smiling in an unnatural, creepy way.

IAN (V.O.)
I don't know what's going on with her... or you... but I think you should stay away, for a little at least, see if she still likes you.

Bear's mind goes to the ONE WISH WILLOW. He can't believe it, but he does. He understands now.

IAN (V.O) (CONT'D)
Hello? Bear?

Bear hangs up and slowly walks over to the dinner table. *Total shock*.

NICKY
Everything ok?

BEAR
Nicky, do you...

NICKY
What...?

BEAR
(deep in thought)
Nothing.

NICKY
I have something.

Nicky pulls out a small, old-looking box.

BEAR
What's this?

NICKY
(eerie)
Open it.

Bear hesitates but opens it. It's a silky, reddish-brown stone.

NICKY (CONT'D)
It's a Chatoyant Quartz, a Tiger's Eye.

A beat.

BEAR
Wow.

NICKY
It was my mom's, then it was mine. It's supposed to bring you confidence and willpower. So, now you can be a food critic.

BEAR
Why're you giving it to *me*?

NICKY
Bear, this stone's *important* to me. Well, you know, after my dad left...

A beat.

BEAR
So why are you giving it to *me*?

NICKY
Because... *you're* important to me.

Bear thinks. He grabs the stone and holds it against his chest.

BEAR
(testing)
So, you love me?

NICKY
Bear, I love you so much. I don't think I could live without you.

Nicky gives Bear an eerie, creepy smile. It could almost be interpreted as threatening.

BEAR
(testing)
So you would be kinda sad without me...?

NICKY
Yep.

They sit in silence. He turns the stone over in his hand.

BEAR
Nicky?

NICKY
Yeah?

BEAR
Does your dad really have cancer?

NICKY
(softly)
No, no, no, no, no, no.

Nicky abruptly gets up from the table.

BEAR
What?

NICKY
Noooooo don't do *that*!

The restaurant slips into a hushed, uneasy silence, all eyes on them, the air charged with discomfort.

BEAR
(calm)
What? Sit down, please.

NICKY
(angry)
Why does it matter, Bear?!

BEAR
What do you mean-

Bear looks around, embarrassed.

NICKY
I thought we were having a nice date?

BEAR
We are! We are...

A pause. Nicky sits, and the restaurant buzz resumes. Playfully, she grabs Bear's leg under the table, her eerie smile returning.

NICKY
Then why does it matter...?

Silence settles. Bear, lost in thought, realizes his yearning for her overshadows all. Her actions, her lies — it all fades, only her presence matters.

BEAR
(matter of fact)
Doesn’t matter to me.

His response reveals a disregard for truth, showing a readiness to ignore darker realities for affection, hinting at a deeply flawed person.

INT. BEAR’S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nicky slams Bear against the wall, kissing fiercely. They move to the bed where Bear playfully pushes her down. Clothes shed, Bear kisses her neck.

Mid-moan, Nicky locks eyes with Bear, her expression shifting to SHEER PANIC. With a frantic shove, she pushes him away and lets out a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM, her body trembling.

NICKY
Bear, what the FUCK!

Bear remains unfazed, his eerie calm demeanor chilling. Within moments, she's back, kissing his stomach. The disturbance registers as nothing more than a fleeting inconvenience to him.

NICKY (CONT’D)
Sorry, baby.

BEAR
It’s okay, baby.

They finish, and Bear rolls over to the side.

NICKY
That was amazing, baby.

Bear smiles.

BEAR
Yeah... Yeah.

Bear’s smile fades, a subtle acknowledgment of what he never thought he was.

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Bear wakes up and checks the clock: 3:32 AM. He turns to find Nicky missing from the bed. Sitting up, he scans the room. In a very dark corner, a figure is barely visible — so faint, it might be nothing.

Bear leans forward, squinting intently. Suddenly, the figure steps forward. It's clear SOMEONE is there.

BEAR
(finding the words)
Nicky?

NICKY
(whisper)
Go back to sleep, Bear.

She is naked except for a long trench coat.

BEAR
What’re you doing?

NICKY
(strained whisper)
Watching you sleep. You’re cute when you sleep.

Nicky slowly steps back into her dark corner, morphing into a shadow.

BEAR
Wearing my coat, huh?

NICKY
(blunt)
Smells like you.

BEAR
Can you come back to bed?

NICKY
(whisper)
No.

BEAR
Nicky-

NICKY
(whisper)
No.

Bear leans against the headboard and slides onto his back. The presence of her watchful eyes prevents him from going back to sleep, yet his unease prevents him from doing anything about it.

There is a long silence. The tension grows.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(normal volume)
Make a deal with me.

BEAR
What?

Nicky emerges from the shadows, holding a sharp love crystal. Playfully, she teases like a child, carving into Bear's arm with the crystal.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Nicky. OW!

Bear pulls his arm back. Nicky's eyes ROLL BACK, and she laughs loudly but quickly.

NICKY
(childish)
Love crystal.

Suddenly, she frowns, stands, and walks to the other side of the bed. Nicky halts, her hand extended as if caught mid-run. Her arm remains still, her hand waves slowly at Bear.

After a pause, she quickly drops back onto the bed, kisses Bear on the cheek, and closes her eyes. Terrified, Bear waits briefly before cautiously standing.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(without moving)
STAAAAAAAAYYYYY!

He quickly lies back, staring at the ceiling, heart racing.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Bear and Nicky stand by the front door. Bear puts his lanyard on and kisses Nicky goodbye.

BEAR
I'll see you after work.

NICKY
Okay... I wish I were scheduled today.

BEAR
No! Enjoy your day off!

Nicky sticks out her lower lip.

NICKY
I'll try. I'll be *right here* when you get home.

BEAR
(uncomfortable)
Okay.

We focus on Nicky as Bear exits. She stays still, an awkward smile frozen on her face. Despite the sound of the door closing, she doesn't move. Nicky begins to pee, the liquid running down her leg, staining the floor yellowish-red.

INT. MANDY'S MUSIC (INVENTORY) - DAY

Bear and Sarah fold up boxes in the inventory room.

SARAH
Are you going to Ian's tonight?

BEAR
First I've heard.

Sarah scoffs.

SARAH
(I wonder why)
Well...

BEAR
Well, what?

Nothing more.

BEAR (CONT'D)
I heard what you told Ian.

SARAH
About what?

BEAR
About Nicky. Said she friend-zoned me.

A long beat.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Look, I don't know what Nicky has said in the past-

SARAH
I mean, we literally talked about it once. I just think it's weird how you two are dating all of the sudden. Like, super dating.

Bear is hit by this blatant remark.

BEAR
(angry)
I don't know, Sarah.

This is awkward.

SARAH
I mean, honestly, I couldn't care less about whatever game Nicky is playing. I just don't want you to get hurt. And-

BEAR
What's your problem with Nicky-

SARAH
And also if Ian's gonna spread my shit, then you should know Ian and Nicky have-

Carter enters, interrupting them.

CARTER
Sarah, honey. We got one.

Carter pulls out a letter.

SARAH
Oh my god.

Sarah and Carter leave the room. Bear, folding boxes, stealthily glances through the window, watching their reactions to the letter. Sarah's face crumbles; Carter, unmoved.

As Sarah's gaze lifts, Bear ducks his head, avoiding detection. Sarah returns and sits on a nearby tuba case. Her eyes puffy from crying.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I guess that's what I get for being such a fucker in high school, huh?

Bear cautiously sits beside Sarah as she starts to cry.

BEAR
Was that the last one?

Sarah shakes her head no.

SARAH
One more. Luther.

Sarah rests her head on Bear's shoulder. Hesitant, he allows it.

BEAR
You can give me a tattoo without school.

Sarah laughs.

EXT. MANDY'S MUSIC (PARKING LOT) - LATER

Bear walks to his car, Ian follows behind him.

IAN
Hey man, can I get a ride home?

BEAR
Where's *your* car?

IAN
I had to Uber today. Check engine light.

BEAR
Well, I was gonna-

IAN
(not going to work on me)
Run some errands? Come on, we're neighbors.

BEAR
Fine.

IAN
Yes.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

IAN
So, are we going to talk about you and Nicky?

BEAR
(reluctant)
What about it?

IAN
Uhh, are you serious?

BEAR
Dude, you know I've liked her.

IAN
I *really* think you should stay away from her for a bit-

BEAR
I am the happiest I've probably ever been.

IAN
Just for a little-

BEAR
And you're trying to give me reasons not to be.

IAN
If she still likes you in a week...

Ian realizes this is harsh.

IAN (CONT'D)
I just don't want you, or Nicky for that matter, to get hurt.

BEAR
Second time I've heard that today.

IAN
Because she's also my friend, and I'm totally thrown off by this. Can you just please break this down for me?

BEAR
I don't want to break it down for you.

IAN (CONT'D)
She lied about her dad?! Why?-

BEAR (CONT'D)
I'm not breaking down our relationship-

IAN
And now, she's sleeping over all the time?

BEAR
I heard you're having a shindig tonight-

IAN
And you don't think this is weird at all!

BEAR
Were you going to invite us?

IAN
You have to admit that's WEIRD- Oh, so now you're an "US?"

BEAR
Why didn't you invite me to the party?

IAN
Don't change the subject. I'm not going to invite you two to my place.

BEAR
Why not?

Bear's car stops in front of Ian's house.

IAN
Because it *kind of* looks like Nicky is going through something... And it *kind of* looks like you're taking advantage of the situation-

BEAR
Oh, fuck you man! She's all over me! Are you fucking kidding me?

IAN (CONT'D)
I say it with love, Bro! I'm saying it with love. I'm on your side, but it's a bad look. It's a bad look man.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Why are you trying to ruin something good?-

IAN
What's it gonna look like to other people? Carter even said something. It's a bad look.

BEAR
That's not fair. She's the one who won't leave me alone!

A beat.

IAN
Fine, you want to come over tonight?

BEAR
Yeah, I do.

IAN
Nicky can't come.

A beat.

BEAR
Dude.

IAN
No. Nicky can't come, it's a boy's night. I'll tell Sarah not to come too, and that should be totally fine.

BEAR
Fine.

IAN
Because if the relationship is healthy. And it's not built on some weird codependency, dad dying or not dying- what the-fuck ever... then she should have no problem with you doing a boy's night.

BEAR
Fine. Fine with me.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bear pushes the door open and flicks on the lights. Stepping inside, he's greeted by Nicky, soaked in sweat and vomit, standing in a sickening pool of bodily fluids. She is in the same spot where he left her, with urine staining her clothes and vomit still dribbling from her mouth.

NICKY
(happy)
Bear!

Nicky springs at Bear, hugging him eagerly like an excited dog. Bear protests, arms raised.

BEAR
Ugh! Nicky, what the fuck?! Are you okay?

Realizing her condition, Nicky steps back, embarrassed.

NICKY
God, I should shower!

BEAR
(concerned, confused)
What the fuck happened?

NICKY
I think I ate a bug... I mean, got a stomach bug... or both.

Nicky gives an uneasy laugh amid the terrible smell. Bear's eyes WIDE with confusion and fear.

BEAR
Did you have a seizure or something?

NICKY
I was waiting for you to come home.

Nicky looks at herself again and shivers with revulsion.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Oh god, I'm disgusting. Let me shower, and I'll clean this all up.

Nicky walks off-screen.

BEAR
Nicky, I don't understand.

We hear the water turn on. The bathroom door SLAMS.

NICKY (O.S.)
I'll clean it, Baby

Bear moves to the bathroom door, speaking through it, his voice raised above the water's noise.

BEAR
Nicky?

NICKY (O.S.)
Yeah?

BEAR
...You love me right?

NICKY (O.S.)
Yeah, a lot.

BEAR
...Okay, so never do that again, okay?

NICKY (O.S.)
What? Stand by the door all day and wait for you to come home?

Bear, overwhelmed with guilt, rests his head on the door.

BEAR
Yeah...yeah, don't do that.

NICKY (O.S.)
Ok, honey.

The loud running water amplifies the HEAVY SILENCE.

BEAR
So what *did* you do all day?

NICKY (O.S.)
That's it.

It takes a second for Bear to speak again.

BEAR
(defeated, unsure)
Hey, listen, Ian invited me to boy's night, tonight.

The shower water STOPS, plunging everything into eerie quiet. Bear's eyes widen.

NICKY (O.S.)
(hurt)
Okay.

BEAR
So... I think I'm gonna go to that, if it's okay with you.

NICKY (O.S.)
A boy's night?

BEAR
Yeah.

NICKY (O.S.)
I can get dressed and go with you.

BEAR
Oh man, that... that would be awesome.

NICKY (O.S.)
Okay, let me freshen up.

BEAR
Yeah, it's just that Ian was saying it's a boy's night. So I think... *I* should just go.

NICKY (O.S.)
That's so weird because Sarah was telling me *she*'s going.

BEAR
Really?

NICKY (O.S.)
Yep.

BEAR
(to himself)
Huh.

NICKY (O.S.)
So, I think I could probably go.

Silence.

BEAR
(somber)
Yeah... I mean, in that case, yeah. You probably could.

NICKY (O.S.)
I think I will. I can literally walk there.

BEAR
You should-

Bear softly hits his head on the door.

BEAR (CONT'D)
You should ask Sarah if she's still going, though... because I think, uh, Ian decided it was a guy's thing, last minute.

Suddenly, Nicky unleashes an INHUMAN SCREAM, terrifying Bear.

BEAR (CONT'D)
You okay?!

NICKY (O.S.)
I'll ask her.

The phone rings on the other side of the door.

SARAH (V.O.)
(confused)
Hello?

NICKY (O.S.)
Are you going to Ian's?

Bear is UNCOMFORTABLE. He maintains his distance from the door, bracing for another scream.

SARAH (ON THE PHONE)
...Yeah, why?

NICKY (O.S.)
Huh.

SARAH (V.O.)
Are you here?

NICKY (O.S.)
No. I'm here.

SARAH (V.O.)
Where?

NICKY (O.S.)
I'll talk to you later.

SARAH (V.O.)
(passive-aggressive)
K. Whatever.

Silence.

NICKY (O.S.)
(to Bear)
Ok well... I'll just stay here. Bear, you can go.

BEAR
I mean, if Sarah's going-

NICKY (O.S.)
No, it's okay. You can go without me.

BEAR
No, you should go.

BEAR (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. You should come.

NICKY
Well, If you wanted me to go- Nooo, I think I'll stay.

Bear doesn't know what to do.

INT. IAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The house is modest yet aged, filled with booming music. Bear fixes himself a drink as Ian approaches.

IAN
Sup, Co-dipshit.

BEAR
Don't call me that.

Bear looks into the living room; *Nicky* laughs at a joke.

IAN
That's your new nickname, Co-dip-shit.

BEAR
Wow. Creative.

IAN
I knew you were going to bring her. She guilt you?

BEAR
She didn't guilt me. Shut the fuck up.

IAN
(egging on)
You couldn't be without her for three hours?

Bear finishes his drink.

BEAR
Sarah invited her. What was I supposed to do?

IAN
Sure-

BEAR
You told me you weren't *inviting* Sarah.

The two walk into the-

INT. IAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They join the party: Sarah, REGGIE, 27, tall and lanky; JOE, 22, the younger brother type; CHRIS, 24, happy-go-lucky.

IAN
Sarah did nothing wrong.

BEAR
(under his breath)
Well, neither did we.

IAN
(sternly to Bear)
No weird shit.

Ian sits beside Sarah, the room alive with DRUNK JENGA. Nicky, looking HOT, signals Bear. Hopeful, Bear joins her, craving a hint of normality.

Reggie pulls a block out from the Jenga tower and reads it aloud.

REGGIE
Choose someone to drink every time you do for the next three rounds, starting now.
(to Ian)
Your house, you're going down with the ship!

IAN
Fine.

They drink. Everyone laughs. Joe pulls a block.

JOE
(reading)
Switch seats with someone.
(to the group)
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)
Hmm. Baron, I want to sit next to Nicky.

Everyone laughs as if they're in on the joke.

NICKY
(pleading)
Noooo.

Bear laughs, stands, and Nicky catches his hand.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(childish)
No, don't leave me.

BEAR
It's fine.

He moves over to Sarah and Joe sits next to Nicky.

REGGIE
Jesus Bear, what kinda spell did you put on her?

Everyone laughs.

BEAR
I can be hard to resist-

Nicky's laughter erupts, loud and forced, getting everyone's attention. Silence. She STANDS, laughing again — a forceful, exaggerated laugh.

She halts, stares directly at the ceiling in silence, then turns her gaze back to the crowd.

NICKY
So true.

Nicky sits, leaving the room in uncertain silence. Ian, shaking his head, pulls a block, attempting to reclaim the mood.

IAN
(blunt)
Take a shot.

Ian downs a shot. Setting the glass down, its clink echoes deafeningly in the room's sudden silence.

SARAH
(awkward)
Nicky, it's your turn.

NICKY
Yay!

Nicky pulls a brick, doesn't read it aloud, stands, grabs her phone, and starts reading.

NICKY (CONT'D)
The air was charged by the distant call of a nightbird. His face was obscured, but I knew he was looking at my chest, each side stretching, recently matured to different sizes.

Nicky, EERILY STILL, uses her voice to embody the characters.

NICKY (CONT'D)
"Hansel, come lie with me, like the Old Woman taught us when we were children," I said. He closed the door and leaned against it. "You're not my wife, Gretel," he said. "I am more than your wife. I'm your sister."

Some people chuckle, but Nicky is impassioned by the words.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Hansel flinched and reached for the door handle. I knew he would not leave this place. He would relent and choose to be inside me like he had many nights before. If not, I would have fileted his meaty forearm, rolled it like a stick of licorice, and inserted his flesh between my legs.

Laughter turns to unease. Nicky sets her phone down, reciting the remainder from memory.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Hansel is my soul, my cud. "Brother, you will be inside me tonight." I went to him at the wall and reached for his sharp shoulders. His eyes were on the door, but his hands grabbed my hips.

She sits.

NICKY (CONT'D)
New book I'm working on. I don't have to drink now.

The room remains SILENT. Finally, Chris speaks up.

CHRIS
(awkward)
It's your turn, Joe.

JOE
Well, that means it's Bear's turn because we switched spots.

BEAR
Oh shit. Okay.

Bear reads a brick, his face pales. He glances at Nicky, who leans forward with anticipation. Then, he looks at Ian.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Kiss the person to your left.

It's Sarah. "Oohs" and "wows" ripple through the crowd. as Nicky swiftly rises, capturing everyone's attention. Moving deliberately, she stops behind Sarah, who sits in a metal fold-up chair.

Discomfort thickens as Nicky grabs Sarah's chair, pausing tensely before dragging it back, the creak echoing through the room. Settling into Sarah's place, she puckers up childishly, eyes tightly shut.

Bear scans the shocked faces before leaning in to kiss Nicky. Tears stream down her closed eyes as she sobs heavily, the rhythm like a broken record. Her head sways until she composes herself enough to speak.

NICKY
No one on this earth will ever comprehend what it feels like to love someone as much as I love you.

Nicky rises, words catching in her throat.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(now to the crowd)
And everyone in this room will die...
(looking at Ian)
never feeling the strength of connection I have felt with my Bear.

Ian shoots Nicky an almost hurt look. She returns to her original seat in silence.

IAN
(somber, nearly a whisper)
Nicky, are you okay?

NICKY
I'm just kidding, guys.

Some relief in the room, but still quiet.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(defiant)
Okay, fine, I'm not kidding. Live with it.

Speechless and uncomfortable, no one stirs. The focus shifts to Bear, visibly shaken, his gaze fixed on Nicky.

IAN (O.S.)
Uhm, who wants Jell-O shots?

No one.

REGGIE (O.S.)
I'll take one.

IAN (O.S.)
Okay. Thank you, Reggie.

We hear Ian stand up. His voice sounds distant.

IAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Any other takers?

Nicky locks eyes with Bear, guilt washing over her. Suddenly, she JOLTS back into her body, the TRUE NICKY emerging.

She moves abruptly, franticly searching for ANYTHING that could hurt her. A vodka bottle. She SMASHES it on the table. Everyone jerks back in fear.

NICKY
(begging)
IT'S NOT ME! PLEASE!

After several attempts, the glass shatters. She grabs the broken end of the bottle and stabs it into her face.

The blunt glass FAILS to puncture, causing damage nonetheless. She manages one more stab before switching back to HAPPY NICKY.

She drops the glass. Everyone is up, some cower in the corners.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Oh my god. Ian, I'm so sorry.

Blood drips from various wounds on her face.

IAN (O.S.)
Okay Bear, take her out.

Bear, is horrified and worried.

NICKY (O.S.)
Okay, okay, I am so sorry guys. Oh my god. It's ok. It was a joke. I'm leaving. I'm sorry.

Nicky's voice is distant.

NICKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Come on, babe.

Everyone looks at Bear.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - LATER

Nicky rests her broken face on Bear's shoulder as he drives. She looks desperate, clinging on for dear life. Then her face morphs to pure affection, then panic again. Bear is frightened and miserable.

EXT. HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

From afar we see Bear and a NURSE try to get a reluctant Nicky out of his car. Nicky pushes Bear off of her, refusing to go.

Bear pulls the Nurse off to the side.

While they talk, Nicky gets out of the car and begins to do a little *dance*.

The Nurse ultimately refuses to take Nicky *because of the principle of informed consent.*

EXT. BEAR'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Bear reluctantly lets Nicky hold his hand as they enter the house.

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - DINING TABLE - MOMENTS LATER

Bear and Nicky sit at opposite ends of the dinner table. Frustrated, Bear bows his head.

After a moment, Nicky approaches, sitting beside Bear. She gently places her hand on his. He tolerates it briefly before standing up abruptly.

NICKY
Where ya going?

BEAR
I'm just going to the bathroom, Nicky.

NICKY
Can I stand outside?

BEAR
Nicky... why did you do that? Why did you act that way tonight?

NICKY
I know. I said I'm sorry.

BEAR
You're scaring everyone. And you hurt yourself. Look at your face.

NICKY
Bear, I don't know why I did that. I just get nervous. I'm sorry. And I know Sarah likes you.

BEAR
Do <u>you</u> like me?

NICKY
What do you mean? I love you, Bear.

BEAR
No, like... Do you even like me?

Bear's guilt and frustrations fuel his questions.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Are you happy? Is *Nicky* happy?

Nicky's expression shifts like a robot on default, her smashed-up face adding to the unsettling nature.

NICKY
(robotic)
Yeah, for sure.

Bear's face fills with confusion.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(robotic)
I'm your Freaky Nicky.

Bear recoils, overwhelmed by guilt, and walks away.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Where're you going?

BEAR
NICKY! I'm going to the bathroom! Can I do that? Can I go to the bathroom?!

NICKY
Can you tell me you love me?

A beat.

BEAR
Maybe you should go home tonight.

NICKY
I DON'T WANT TO GO HOME!

BEAR
We only *just* started dating! We need space!

NICKY
What can I do? Tell me what I should do! Please!

Bear's eyes well up. What happened to his friend? Nicky cries, tears streaking pink over dried blood.

BEAR
Just be normal! Please!

NICKY
(desperate)
I can be normal!

BEAR
Just be Nicky!

NICKY
OK, I'M SORRY! I *can* be! I *can* be!

Nicky collapses, sobbing. Her words now sound SO GENUINE, making it hard not to comfort her.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(through the tears)
I can be anything you want me to be.

Bear walks over and holds her.

BEAR
No! Don't say *that*.

NICKY
I'll be anything you want.

BEAR
No... See! Nicky wouldn't do that. She's confident and knows who she is- I just want you to be Nicky!

NICKY
Okay! Okay, let me be Nicky.

BEAR
You're not being like Nicky!

NICKY
I can be Nicky, I'm sorry. I love you, I'm sorry. I love you.

A beat.

BEAR
But it's not real.

NICKY
What do you mean?!

BEAR
You didn't- It's not, real...

Nicky looks at Bear, her face a mess.

NICKY
(genuine)
I love you in every reality, Bear.

She's CONVINCING. A tear falls from Bear's eye, overwhelmed with guilt.

Suddenly, Nicky jumps up, startling Bear. We see the bottom of Nicky's legs as she removes her pants and panties.

NICKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Let's fuck, Bear.

BEAR
Huh?

Nicky's bare legs walk off-screen.

NICKY (O.S.)
Come on. Let's fuck, Bear.

Bear glances over to Nicky, now in the hallway leading to the bedroom. She stands half-naked, mostly obscured by shadows.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(emotionless)
I'm normal.

BEAR
What?

NICKY
(emotionless)
Hi, I'm Normal.

BEAR
Nicky, what the hell?

NICKY
Rail me Bear. I'm Normal.

BEAR
That's not normal!

NICKY
What do you want?-

BEAR
I just want you to not act *crazy*-

NICKY
(robotic)
Well If you loved Nicky the way Nicky was... Nicky wouldn't have changed for you.

She cracks a broken smile through her wounds, TERRIFYING. She moves toward Bear in slow motion, unsettling and inhumane. *Her lips don't match her words.*

NICKY (CONT'D)
Come on Bear, rail my guts in like Hansel fucks his sister.

BEAR
(scared)
Nicky stop!

She stops.

Nicky
(sweet)
Bear, what's a One Wish Willow?

Nicky smiles; Checkmate.

Bear
I...I don't know.

NICKY
(emotionless)
Thank you for showing me that I love you.

She grabs Bear's hand, and he reluctantly follows.

We stay on this empty shot as we hear moaning from the other room grow in intensity.

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bear, wide awake, is cradled by Nicky who is fast asleep.

DING! Bear's phone blares. He quickly silences it and dims the brightness. A text from Sarah: *How is she?*

Bear cautiously replies: *She's okay. Sleeping now.*

Sarah: *How are you?*

Bear ponders.

Bear: *pretty good actually. We worked things out.*

Sarah: *I need to tell you something.*

Sarah: *Multiple things...*

Sarah: *I'm at the park.*

Bear carefully eyes Nicky, still sleeping. He gently removes her arm from his shoulder and untangles her leg. Sneaking toward the hallway, he moves one foot at a time.

NICKY (O.S.)
(a faint whisper)
Bear.

Bear freezes.

BEAR
(matching her volume)
Yeah.

NICKY (O.S.)
(whispering)
Kill me, Bear. Please.

Bear slowly turns to face her. She lies in the same position. Her eyes seem closed, but it's too dark to tell.

BEAR
What?

NICKY
She’s sleeping... It’s me.

Bear's eyes widen as the *friend he once knew* speaks.

BEAR
(normal volume)
You *are* you, Nicky?

NICKY
(whisper)
Shh! *Please,* don’t wake her.

Bear looks at her, then looks to the ground.

NICKY (CONT’D)
(whisper)
Kill me, Bear.

Too ashamed to look at her. his voice quivers as he talks.

BEAR
What would be so bad... What’s so bad about being with me?

A long beat.

NICKY
I’ve never been with you, Bear.

Bear contemplates his actions. Slowly, he turns and exits the room. Despite her pleas, Bear shows no empathy.

NICKY (O.S.) (CONT’D)
(quietly begging)
Bear, please, please...

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bear moves CAUTIOUSLY through the house, slipping his shoes on silently. He does *not* want to wake her.

EXT. FRANKLIN PARK - PARKING LOT - LATER

In an empty parking lot, only one SUV sits parked. Bear approaches and slides into the passenger seat.

INT. SARAH'S SUV - NIGHT

Sarah and Bear sit in the car. Sarah, in a purple flower dress, her tattoos accentuated by the soft lighting. The car is slightly filled with smoke, enhancing the intimate vibe.

BEAR
I didn't know you still did this.

SARAH
Did what?

BEAR
Parked at Franklin and chilled.

SARAH
Well, I don't really do this anymore... So what the fuck is up with Nicky?

Sarah takes a drag.

BEAR
Well...

Bear's stumped.

BEAR (CONT'D)
She hasn't told many people this... but her dad's dying. So... I think she just is going through a lot.

SARAH
Jesus Christ. Isn't she like not close with him at all?

BEAR
No, they're close now... So, it's painful...

SARAH
I thought she hated her dad.

BEAR
Nope... She doesn't.

Lying through his teeth.

SARAH
Well, look, I know she and I aren't close anymore, but I *do* hope she figures it out. She seems pretty fucked up. I also don't think it's right that she's leaning on you.

A beat.

BEAR
What do you mean?

Sarah
Well, she's going through something very heavy, and she's totally relying on you. That's not healthy at all. Especially because her and-

Bear
I don't mind being there for her-

SARAH
But that's not your responsibility. She needs therapy. And it's not okay for her to take advantage of you.

A beat.

BEAR
(confused)
She's not taking advantage of me.

Sarah's eyes have a secret.

SARAH
(changing the subject)
Hey, so I um, I got my letter.

BEAR
You got your letter from Luther?

Bear picks up a letter on the dash of the car.

SARAH
Yep. My last chance. I figured we could open it together?

BEAR
Oh shit!

SARAH
If I get in, I can work on my sketches, make'em better. Open up my own shop. Maybe my dad will let me tattoo "successful daughter" where his hair is supposed to start.

Bear laughs.

BEAR
Can I pay you to do that?

Sarah laughs.

SARAH
We'll take him in his sleep.

BEAR
(playful)
I got sleeping pills in my pocket. We could do this tonight.

They laugh until it dies down.

BEAR (CONT'D)
So, do you wanna open this thing or?

SARAH
I do.

Bear hands it to Sarah.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I just, I need to tell you some things.

BEAR
Ok.

She fidgets and sighs, working up the nerve.

SARAH
I really do like you Bear... And I don't think you should be with Nicky.

Bear sits with this.

BEAR
Ok... why?

SARAH
I promised Ian I wouldn't tell you this.

BEAR
What are you talking about?

SARAH
(ashamed)
Nicky and Ian have been hooking up on and off for like 2 years. It's super chill, and not romantic, and Ian really does care about you, Bear. But a few weeks ago, Ian cut things off with Nicky, and she was acting so weird, we thought she was just dating you to get back at Ian-

Not far behind Sarah, we see NICKY running head-first into the driver-side window. Glass shatters. Nicky wedges a BRICK against the steering wheel, then grabs Sarah by the hair, relentlessly smashing her face in. Each blow triggers the horn, caving Sarah's SKULL deeper inside out.

Bear, in TOTAL SHOCK, presses himself against the passenger door. Nicky, without looking up, STOPS. Her hair, covered in brain matter, obscures her face as she breathes deeply.

NICKY
I'm sorry you had to see that, but it's kinda your fault.

Bear dares not speak. Nicky keeps her head down.

NICKY (CONT'D)
My heart took a path I never chose. Just remember that.

BLOOD runs down her forehead from the window's impact.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(crying)
You wanted this, but I'm so glad you did. I'm so glad you did, baby. Thank you.

Bear, paralyzed by shock, incapable of a retort. She advances to his side of the car, wrenches the door open. Bear recoils, instinctively bracing for a imminent burst of violence.

NICKY (CONT'D)
No, no, no, no. It's okay. I'm so glad you did, baby. I'm so happy I'm yours.

Bear breaks down, crying. Nicky holds him.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(consoling)
Oh, no no no baby. It's okay, baby. I've got you, that's all that matters. We need each other... We need each other and there is an after, Sarah is fine. I know baby... I'm sorry. And you know what? I'm going to help you.

BEAR
No. No no no no no.

NICKY
Yes baby, you're gonna have to help me get rid of her, baby-

BEAR
(groaning)
No no no no no.

NICKY
Honey, this is your fault. I'm sorry but Sarah is your fault, but I'm gonna- you know what? I'm gonna *help you* fix this. Okay? I'm here for you. We can fix this, baby. I forgive you, I won't hold it against you, but we have to get rid of her, okay?

Nicky pulls back from Bear, locking eyes. Bear, drenched in Sarah's blood.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Shake your head "Yes."

Bear cries and shakes his head "No."

NICKY (CONT'D)
We have to get rid of this tiny, gross body. Yes, yes, yes.

Bear continues to shake his head.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Nod your head "Yes."

Bear, realizing he has no choice, nods yes.

EXT. MANDY'S MUSIC - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Nicky exits the store with a giant tuba case. Bear and Nicky fold Sarah's naked body into it, adding sandbags. They place her in the trunk of her SUV.

Bear re-enters the store, leaving Nicky alone with the body. She glances inside to confirm Bear's distraction, then back at the body; up to something.

INT. MANDY'S MUSIC - BREAK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bear sits at the table, dark and quiet. The sound of tape being wrapped around a tuba case fills the air, then stops abruptly as Nicky enters.

NICKY
She's ready, baby. Why don't you go home? I'll take care of it from here.

Bear doesn't look up.

EXT. VIEWPOINT - SUNRISE

A breathtaking sunrise illuminates the foothills. Bear sits in his car, solitary. He retrieves SARAH'S LETTER from his pocket, hesitates, then unfolds it.

Dear Sarah Harper, Congratulations! On behalf of the Admissions Committee, it is with great pleasure, I extend to you an offer of admission to the Luther Art School for the upcoming academic year.

Bear's tears flow silently. Regret consumes him. After a moment, he lifts his head, resolute, ready to <u>fix</u> his mistakes.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - SUNRISE

Bear zooms down the street with a determined look on his face. He lets out a scream.

EXT. CRYSTAL SHOP - PARKING LOT - SUNRISE

Bear hops out of his car and storms into the shop.

INT. CRYSTAL SHOP - MORNING

Bear heads straight for the One Wish Willow section. It's empty.

BEAR
No. No. No.

Bear storms over to the clerk, noticing it's a different worker.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Where are they?! The One Wish Willow's!

HARRY
Sir?

BEAR
Please! Please, tell me you have them! Where are they? THE ONE WISH WILLOWS?

Harry, 34, oddball, points behind the counter.

HARRY
We moved them. They're right here! Sir, don't come in here with this. It's too early.

BEAR
Oh.

Three One Wish Willows left.

HARRY
Yeah, Yeah. You made a shitty wish, and you want to reverse it. You don't have to storm in here with this energy.

BEAR
(frantic)
What the fuck! What the fuck is *wrong* with you?!

HARRY
Me?

BEAR
How can you sell this to people?

HARRY
The box is *full of* warnings, man.

BEAR
Fuck YOU!

HARRY
(scolding)
Hey, fuck you man!

Bear catches his reflection in an aged, dirty mirror behind the front desk. Bloodied, dirt-streaked, his eyes blaze with madness.

BEAR
Nobody would- how... I'm sorry...

Bear, overwhelmed by emotion, collapsing to the ground.

BEAR (CONT'D)
(balling)
I'm sorry. I'm so so so so sorry.

HARRY
Oh god... What did you do?

Bear can't speak.

HARRY (CONT'D)
(checking the store to make sure they're alone)
Oh, god.

BEAR
(through the tears)
She's obsessed with me.

HARRY
(comforting)
Oh. Well, that's not so bad.

BEAR
(breathing hard)
Help me reverse it.

HARRY
Noooo.

BEAR
I'm gonna make another wish.

HARRY
(comforting)
You know you can't do that.
You knew that going in, man.
You knew you couldn't-

BEAR (CONT'D)
No no no Please.
I didn't know-

HARRY (CONT'D)
You knew. Even if you didn't know, you knew.

BEAR
No, this isn't right.

HARRY
Sounds to me like you have a moral obligation to be there for her.

BEAR
But she doesn't really want me. It's not real. It's not right.

HARRY
Right...

A beat.

HARRY (CONT'D)
But she does. And she would be miserable without you.

BEAR
Right...

Bear glances from Harry to the One Wish Willow display, an idea sparking.

EXT. CRYSTAL SHOP (PARKING LOT) - LATER

Bear leaves the shop, three One Wish Willow boxes in his shirt, eyes burning with determination and anger.

EXT. IAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Bear knocks on Ian's door. Ian finally answers.

IAN
Hi Baron, what's up? Texted you fifty times.

He lets himself in.

INT. IAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

IAN
(sarcastically)
Come on in.

BEAR
Okay, Nicky all of a sudden started liking me and acting all weird.

IAN
Um, Yeah...

Bear pulls out a <u>One Wish Willow</u> box.

BEAR
I made a wish... I broke this piece of wood. And at first, I was really confused, but it’s real.

IAN
(confused)
Uh, what?

Bear rubs his face and sighs.

BEAR
You can make a wish. YOU! You can make *one* wish. And it’s REAL! And it’ll work. I wished Nicky loved me, and I didn't think it was *real* or that it was gonna work! But dude, that is why she’s acting insane. Like think about how drastically she changed.

Ian takes this in.

IAN
Okay, what did you take her *to*? A psychic, what?

BEAR
Huh?

Ian tries to make sense of the nonsense.

IAN
What did you- what’s this program?

BEAR
No! It’s not a program, Ian. It’s god fuckin magic. It’s fucking real dude!

Ian grabs the box. Intrigued.

IAN
This?

BEAR
YES! Yes! I made a wish. And it's horrible. And I need it-

IAN
(playing along)
Make another wish-

BEAR
No, you *can't*! You can't. You only get one wish. But it's real.

A long beat.

BEAR (CONT'D)
It's real, Ian.

Ian doesn't know what to say.

BEAR (CONT'D)
So, I need you to wish... that *I* never made a wish. And you can be with Nicky, okay?!

IAN
Is that what this is about?

BEAR
No! NO!

IAN
I was gonna tell you.

BEAR
I don't CARE! I don't fucking care about that! Just open the box- but you gotta be careful how you word it... Maybe say-

Ian opens up the package. Sparks Fly!

BEAR (CONT'D)
Woah. WOAH! Okay, okay! Say, I wish my friend Baron never made-

Ian grins, casually tossing out his first thought, not serious.

IAN
(laughing)
I wish for a billion dollars.

Ian <u>pops</u> the stick!

BEAR
NOOOO!

Stacks of hundred-dollar bills RAIN FROM THE CEILING, covering Bear and Ian. Bear drops to his knees, defeated.

Ian's jaw drops in DISBELIEF. Bear, teeth clenched, endures the barrage of bills, flinching yet maintaining eye contact with Ian.

Bear stands, a switch flips. Wiping away tears, angry and determined, he leaves the house.

EXT. IAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The door remains open as Bear walks away, money still falling inside the house.

EXT. BEAR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bear approaches the house, One Wish Willows in hand, noting the empty driveway with skepticism.

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bear cautiously enters. The room is stark, unsettling.

The table is set up like a shrine in his memory - flowers, a prominent photo of Bear and Nicky. Ian and Sarah are CUT from the pictures. A collection of Bear's life - personal items, childhood photos. Bear's gaze sweeps over the eerie homage.

BEAR
Nicky?

Nothing. Bear opens a One Wish Willow.

BEAR (CONT'D)
(whisper)
I wish Nicky didn't love me.

In the b.g. we slightly see a dark figure, edging closer.

NICKY (O.S.)
(a sad whisper)
I think you'll want me to love you, Bear.

Bear finally looks up from his trance to see, right in the corner ottoman, SARAH'S LIFELESS AND NAKED BODY sitting upright, eerily stiff.

He freezes at the sight, then slowly turns around. Nicky stands there, holding the brick she used to kill Sarah.

NICKY (CONT'D)
She had to see us...

Nicky's head, covered in dried blood, has a brownish tint. She's in Sarah's floral dress, with Sarah's tattoos crudely copied onto her arm and chest. Casually, she takes a drag from a joint.

BEAR
Nicky.

She inhales over and over again, aggressively sucking the smoke into her lungs. Suddenly, a knock on the door.

IAN (O.S.)
Yo, Bear, this shit's crazy!

She starts to cough. Instead of putting it out, she slides the lit joint into her mouth, wincing at the brief pain and swallowing the joint.

NICKY
You like me better now?

BEAR
No.

NICKY
You love me better now, Bear?

BEAR
NO, NICKY!

NICKY
(desperate)
Why don't you love me?
(screams)
WHY CAN'T YOU LOVE ME?!

Nicky takes the brick and SMASHES HER HEAD in the same way she killed Sarah.

BEAR
STOP! NICKY STOP! YOU DON'T LOVE ME!

She throws the brick on the ground and *walks towards Bear*. Her face is a grotesque mosaic of blood and viscera.

Ian opens the front door, *letting himself in*.

NICKY
I'll shoot myself, Bear! I'll kill myself right in front of you!

Nicky draws a tiny silver revolver from her underwear — the same one from the music shop.

IAN (O.S.)
What the fuck!

BEAR
No, I love you Nicky!

Nicky SHOOTS IAN IN THE HEAD and gets right in Bear's face. So close she could kiss him.

NICKY
I'll rip my FUCKING EYES OUT OF MY SKULL and stick the BARREL IN MY PUSSY, BEAR!

Bear falls back onto the couch. Nicky VOMITS ON BEAR, mostly stomach acid from the lack of food.

BEAR
I love you. I love you, Nicky. I love you.

Nicky SCREAMS in Bear's face, blood and spit flying from her mouth.

NICKY
SCREAM IT!

BEAR
I LOVE YOU! I LOVE YOU!

Nicky falls on top of Bear, crying.

NICKY
(through the tears)
I knew you did... I knew you did, baby. You owe me that. You owe me that.

We stay close up on Bear.

BEAR
(playing along)
We can make this work baby.

NICKY
Yes, I know we can. I'm *gonna* heal.

BEAR
We can work this out, okay?

NICKY
Yes, I know. I'm sorry... I'm sorry for the theatrics... Don't know why I do that. I know you love me. I'm gonna heal.

BEAR
I'm sorry, too.

NICKY
I'll be pretty again, I promise.

BEAR
(up to something)
You're gorgeous. I love you so much.

NICKY
I'm sorry-

BEAR
You're beautiful-

NICKY
I love you so, so much.

Bear gets up.

BEAR
Let's take a shower. Freshen up. Okay?

NICKY
Okay, yeah, okay.

Bear heads to the bathroom, with Nicky closely following.

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

He *quickly* shuts the bathroom door behind him, *locking Nicky out*.

NICKY (O.S.)
NO. Fuck you, Bear. Let me in!

BEAR
I'll only be a second!

Nicky hammers on the door, relentless and fierce. Bear slumps over the sink, a picture of defeat, staring down.

BEAR (CONT'D)
Babe! Just give me a second to freshen up. I'm embarrassed.

Nicky stops.

NICKY (O.S.)
Okay, just a second.

Bear lacks the energy to cry. He stares at his reflection; a stranger. Digging into his pocket, he retrieves Nicky's tiger's eye, gripping it as guilt engulfs him.

A second reach finds Nicky's gun. He points it at his chest, pondering the pain. His fingers search for bone; something feels wrong.

He lowers the weapon, yet despair remains. He places it in his mouth, checking his aim by touching the back of his head, then tilts the gun upward, aiming for the brain.

NO.

He places the gun on the cabinet, eyes the door, then, with a thought, slips it back into his pocket—just in case.

He glances at his reflection, opens the medicine cabinet, and grabs the pills. He swallows as many as he can, then one more for good measure. Sitting on the toilet, he realizes there's no turning back.

Suddenly, a spark ignites within him, the world snapping into focus. It's as if a SPELL has been cast. His eyes widen, and he rises from the toilet, staring at the bathroom door with fierce determination, desperate to reach something beyond it.

INT. BEAR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bear slowly walks out into the hallway with vigor and desperation. He sees Nicky from across the house smiling at him. He smiles back. They laugh together.

It's a total "Rom-Com" moment... minus the blood, wounds, and terrifying undertones.

He slowly approaches and she extends her arms like a child. He leans in and kisses her. *A longing for togetherness. His face becomes covered in blood as he kisses her broken jaw.*

We slowly pan over to reveal, on the table, a freshly used ONE WISH WILLOW. We can tell by its placement that NICKY used it. Bear collapses onto the couch.

NICKY
No, no, no, no.
(whispers)
What did you do? Bear?

Music starts to play, offering a creepy *optimistic* feel in juxtaposition to the terror in front of us. Nicky, now clutching Bear's lifeless form, cradles him with profound sorrow.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Bear no! No no no no no no no!
What did you do? Baby no!

BEAR
(weak)
In this life and the next.

These final words hit Nicky. She takes Bear's gun and, with finality, shoots herself in the head. We remain fixed on this shot, capturing the blood *slowly* dripping, a haunting and somber testament to this tragic love story.

THE END